

## Message Text

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SUBJECT: SOVIET NATIONAL MINORITIES AND US POLICY

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SUMMARY: THE EMBASSY HEREIN SUMMARIZES ITS OBSERVATIONS  
ON CURRENT SITUATION OF SOVIET NATIONAL MINORITIES,  
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GIVES ITS VIEWS ON PROBABLE FUTURE DIRECTION OF DEVELOP-  
MENTS, SUGGESTS THAT USG HAS A REAL, IF LIMITED, INTEREST  
IN CONTINUATION OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE MINORITY  
REPUBLICS AND OFFERS POLICY SUGGESTIONS TOWARD PROMOTING  
THAT INTEREST. END SUMMARY.

1. SOVIET NATIONAL MINORITIES: CURRENT SITUATION. IN

THE REFERENCED AIRGRAMS, THE EMBASSY SUMMARIZED ITS SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS ON THE SOVIET NATIONALITY QUESTION AND SET OUT ITS PRESENT UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEMS NATIONALISM CAUSES THE REGIME.

--THE FIRST CATEGORY OF PROBLEMS STEMS FROM THE EXISTENCE OF ENDURING AND OFTEN WIDELY DIFFERING HERITAGES AMONG SOVIET NATIONALITIES. THIS LEADS TO A VARIETY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL OBSTACLES TO REGIME GOALS. SUCH PHENOMENA AS FAMILY SIZE, RELIGION, LANGUAGE, SOCIAL AND GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY HINDER POLICIES ADOPTED BY THE REGIME AND WILL CONTINUE PARTICULARLY TO AFFECT THE SOVIET LABOR FORCE AND MILITARY MANPOWER BASE. THE SOVIETS HAVE LITTLE DIRECT CONTROL OVER THESE PHENOMENA UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND, AS BREZHNEV MADE CLEAR AT THE OCTOBER 1977 SUPREME SOVIET SESSION, NATIONAL DIFFERENCES ARE TO BE ACCEPTED AS A "GIVEN" FOR DOMESTIC POLICY IN THE NEAR TERM.

--THE SECOND CATEGORY OF PROBLEMS CONSISTS OF THOSE WHICH THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WOULD CONSIDER URGENT AND REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION. AMONG THEM WE WOULD INCLUDE SUCH PROBLEMS AS NATIONALISTIC DISSENT, AND MANIFESTATIONS OF NATIONALISM WHICH THREATEN MAINTENANCE OF AN EFFECTIVE ARMY OR RATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE LABOR FORCE.

2. IN OUR VIEW, THE PROBLEMS NATIONALISM CURRENTLY POSES FOR THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP TEND TO FALL WITHIN THE FIRST CATEGORY AND ARE, THEREFORE, MORE PASSIVE THAN ACTIVE. ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT SEE NATIONALISM IN ANY OF THE REPUBLICS  
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AS AN URGENT, IMMEDIATE PROBLEM FOR THE LEADERSHIP, THERE ARE SOME AREAS - THE BALTIC REPUBLICS, THE WESTERN UKRAINE AND GEORGIA - WHERE NATIONALISM APPEARS TO BE RELATIVELY ACTIVE, AND THERE ARE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS IN MANY OTHER AREAS. IN THESE AREAS, THE LEADERSHIP FACES ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, RACIAL, MILITARY AND PARTY PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE, AT LEAST THEORETICALLY, THE POTENTIAL FOR ACTIVATING NATIONALITY ISSUES WHICH WOULD REQUIRE IMMEDIATE, HIGH-LEVEL ATTENTION.

3. PROSPECTS FOR THE NATIONAL MINORITIES. WHILE THE REGIME MIGHT PREFER, IDEALLY, TO ELIMINATE THE POTENTIAL FOR NATIONALLY-ORIENTED BEHAVIORS WHICH COULD DAMAGE ITS ABILITY TO ACHIEVE IMPORTANT OBJECTIVES, THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP SEEMS WELL AWARE OF THE POLITICALLY EXPLOSIVE NATURE OF NATIONALITY ISSUES AND APPEARS CONTENT, FOR LACK OF ANY BETTER ALTERNATIVE, TO TRY TO ESTABLISH "OBJECTIVE" SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS WHICH OVER THE VERY LONG TERM THEY HOPE WILL ROB NATIONALITY DIFFERENCES OF THEIR POLITICAL SALIENCE, IF NOT ELIMINATE THEM ALTOGETHER.

4. NATIONALITY DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE SHORTER RUN - THE NEXT FIVE TO TEN YEARS - WILL BE CONSTRAINED BY THE REALITY OF THE OVERWHELMING CAPABILITY OF THE CENTRAL

AUTHORITIES TO IMPOSE THEIR WILL ON THE MINORITY NATIONALITIES AND BY THEIR WILLINGNESS, IF PRESSED, TO USE THAT CAPABILITY. WE SEE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE POWER AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE CENTRAL AUTHORITIES WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED BY CIRCUMSTANCES SHORT OF SEVERE MILITARY REVERSES IN WAR OR AN UNPRECEDENTED SERIES OF ECONOMIC DISASTERS. BOTH ARE SUFFICIENTLY REMOTE CONTINGENCIES, IN OUR VIEW, AS NOT TO PLAY A SERIOUS ROLE IN PLANNING US POLICY.

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5. IF THE CONTINUATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF OVERWHELMING SOVIET CENTRAL POWER IS CLEAR, THE CONTINUED WILLINGNESS OF THE CENTRAL AUTHORITIES TO USE THAT POWER SEEMS ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE QUESTIONABLE. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT A REFORMIST, POST-BREZHNEV REGIME (ASSUMING ONE SHOULD

EVENTUALLY COME TO POWER) MIGHT BE LESS WILLING TO USE FORCE TO IMPOSE ITS WILL, OR MIGHT BE PERCEIVED AS LESS WILLING BY MEMBERS OF SOVIET MINORITY NATIONALITIES. UNDER THE LATTER CIRCUMSTANCES, THE EVENTS OF EASTERN EUROPE IN  
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1956, OR OR PRAGUE IN 1968, CONCEIVABLY MIGHT PLAY THEMSELVES OUT AGAIN WITHIN THE SOVIET UNION, MOST LIKELY WITH SIMILARLY TRAGIC RESULTS.

6. WE THINK IT MORE PLAUSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT OPEN NATIONALITY CONFLICT WILL CONTINUE TO BE REPRESSED AND TO BE PERCEIVED BY MOST MEMBERS OF MINORITY NATIONALITIES AS COSTLY AND FUTILE. NATIONALITY CONFLICTS ARE LIKELY TO MANIFEST THEMSELVES BEHIND THE SCENES, IN SUCH AREAS AS COMPETITION FOR SCARCE RESOURCES, OR INSISTENCE ON CULTURAL EXPRESSION AND USE OF NATIVE LANGUAGE. PARTICULARLY IF THE SOVIET UNION CONTINUES TO EXPERIENCE SLOWER ECONOMIC GROWTH THAN THAT TO WHICH IT HAS BEEN ACCUSTOMED, AS SEVERAL STUDIES HAVE SUGGESTED, SUCH INTERNAL POLITICAL CONFLICTS ARE LIKELY TO BECOME MORE INTENSE AND TO COMMAND MORE OF THE TOP LEADERSHIP'S ATTENTION, AS DISTRIBUTION ISSUES BECOME MORE SALIENT. RELATIVELY LESS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR INVESTMENT, AND ECONOMIC PRIORITIES MAY DICTATE LOCATING IT IN AREAS IN SIBERIA, WHILE POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND THE AVAILABILITY OF A LABOR SURPLUS WOULD ARGUE FOR DIRECTING IT TOWARD CENTRAL ASIA.

7. PERCEPTIONS OF DISTRIBUTION INEQUITIES WHICH UP TO NOW DO NOT SEEM TO HAVE PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN FEELINGS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY (WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF THE MEAT-EXPORTING BALTIC STATES), COULD BE SUPERIMPOSED ON AWARENESS OF LINGUISTIC, ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES TO PRODUCE AMONG MINORITY NATIONALITIES GREATER ALIENATION FROM THE CENTRAL AUTHORITIES. NEVERTHELESS, THE POWER REALITIES ARE SUCH THAT THESE FEELINGS ARE UNLIKELY TO BE TRANSMUTED INTO WIDESPREAD ORGANIZED RESISTANCE, ALTHOUGH THEY MAY PRODUCE OCCASIONAL ANOMIC  
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BEHAVIORS - RIOTS, SMALL-SCALE SABOTAGE, GREATER PERSONAL HOSTILITY TOWARD RUSSIANS. MOREOVER, PRESSURES IN THIS DIRECTION WILL BE AT LEAST PARTLY, AND PERHAPS FULLY, COUNTER-BALANCED BY PROCESSES OF ASSIMILATION SUCH AS INTERMARRIAGE, AND PERSONAL ECONOMIC OR PROFESSIONAL

ADVANCEMENT, REINFORCED BY THE BENEFITS ACCRUING FROM A NATION-WIDE DIVISION OF LABOR WHICH MAY BE DEFENSIBLE ON GROUNDS OF SIMPLE ECONOMIC RATIONALITY.

8. U.S. INTERESTS AND POLICIES. AS INDICATED IN THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT OF U.S. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN THE USSR (77 STATE 295597), THE FUNDAMENTAL INTERESTS OF THE U.S. VIS-A-VIS THE USSR ARE:

--STRENGTHENED BILATERAL AND OTHER ARMS CONTROL EFFORTS.

--CONSTRUCTIVE SOVIET INTERNATIONAL BEHAVIOR.

--PROJECTION OF U.S. VIEWS TO THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP AND PEOPLE.

--EXPOSURE OF THE SOVIET UNION TO HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS.

--IMPROVED BILATERAL ATMOSPHERE AND TRADE.

9. WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THESE FUNDAMENTAL INTERESTS, WE BELIEVE THAT THE CONTINUATION OF A CONSCIOUSNESS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY WITHIN THE NON-RUSSIAN REPUBLICS OF THE USSR IS ALSO IN THE U.S. INTEREST. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE INsofar AS THESE NATIONAL DIFFERENCES ENGENDER SOME UNCERTAINTY WITHIN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP ABOUT THE ULTIMATE LOYALTY OF THE REGIME'S MINORITY NATIONALITIES AND THEREFORE EXERCISE A RESTRAINING INFLUENCE ON ITS

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FOREIGN POLICY BEHAVIOR. FORMULATING AND IMPLEMENTING A  
U.S. POLICY OF ENCOURAGING THE CONTINUATION OF NATIONAL  
CONSCIOUSNESS WITHIN THE NON-RUSSIAN REPUBLICS, HOWEVER,  
REQUIRES A DEGREE OF DELICACY WHICH OUR PRESENT LEVEL OF  
KNOWLEDGE DOES NOT READILY PERMIT. TO GIVE AN EXTREME  
EXAMPLE, IT WOULD BE BOTH UNCONCIONABLE AND UNDESIRABLE  
IN TERMS OF THE MORE FUNDAMENTAL U.S. INTERESTS WE HAVE  
CITED FOR US TO CONTRIBUTE UNWITTINGLY TO A HUNGARY 1956-  
TYPE SITUATION IN ONE OF THE MINORITY REPUBLICS. A LESS  
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EXTREME OUTCOME TO A POORLY CONCEIVED POLICY MIGHT BE  
THE RE-AWAKENING OF A MORE CHAUVINISTIC FORM OF RUSSIAN  
NATIONALISM, A POSSIBILITY WHICH WE HAVE DISCUSSED  
IN REPAIRS AND WHICH ALSO SEEMS TO US NOT IN THE U.S.  
INTEREST.

10. WE FIND OUR TASK ANALOGOUS, THEREFORE, TO THAT WHICH  
CONFRONTS U.S. POLICY IN EASTERN EUROPE - TO ENCOURAGE  
THE CONTINUATION OF NATIONAL AND ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS OVER  
THE LONG-TERM BY CAREFUL AND INDIRECT MEASURES WHICH TRY  
TO AVOID PRODUCING SITUATIONS WHICH WOULD LEAD TO LARGE-  
SCALE REPRESSION. A POLICY WHICH GOES BEYOND THESE GOALS  
AND ATTEMPTS TO CONFRONT THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WITH  
URGENT, IMMEDIATE NATIONALITY PROBLEMS IS UNLIKELY TO  
SUCCEED AND, IN THE UNLIKELY EVENTUALITY THAT IT DID,  
WOULD NOT ADVANCE MORE FUNDAMENTAL INTERESTS, AND WOULD  
ALMOST CERTAINLY LEAD TO HARSH DOMESTIC REPRESSION. IN  
DEALING WITH INTERNAL DISSENT - WHETHER BASED ON NATIONAL-  
ISTIC, "REFUSENIK," RELIGIOUS OR HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS -  
THE SOVIET LEADERS HAVE SHOWN THEMSELVES TO HAVE A SHORT  
FUSE AND A LONG ARM. NO "PRAGUE SPRING" IS LIKELY IN THE  
SOVIET UNION AS LONG AS THE VIEWPOINT OF THE CURRENT  
LEADERSHIP PREVALIS.

11. SPECIFIC POLICY SUGGESTIONS. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF  
TANGIBLE, BUT NOT PARTICULARLY CONTROVERSIAL STEPS THE  
UNITED STATES COULD TAKE TO DEMONSTRATE ITS INTEREST  
IN THE NATIONAL MINORITIES, PARTICULARLY BY INCREASING

THE ATTENTION IT PAYS TO THEM.

--FIRST, WE SHOULD DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN WITHIN THE USG A CAPACITY TO FOLLOW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MORE IMPORTANT MINORITY AREAS BY HAVING INTELLIGENCE ANALYSTS CAPABLE OF FOLLOWING PUBLICATIONS IN THESE LANGUAGES. AT PRESENT, WE SEE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE USG HAS THE CAPACITY TO KEEP AN EYE ON INTELLECTUAL CURRENTS IN THE EIGHT OR TEN KEY

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MINORITY AREAS.

--REGARDING USG SPONSORED BROADCASTING IN SOVIET MINORITY LANGUAGES, OUR GENERAL IMPRESSION IS THAT THE LANGUAGE COVERAGE AND TIME DEVOTED TO THIS ACTIVITY IS ABOUT RIGHT FOR BOTH VOA AND RL. HOWEVER, STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF THE NON-RUSSIAN LANGUAGE BROADCASTS, AND THIS WILL REQUIRE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF AMERICAN SUPERVISORS WHO HAVE A KNOWLEDGE OF THE LANGUAGES IN QUESTION.

--EFFORTS COULD BE MADE TO EXPAND THE ITINERARY OF HIGH-LEVEL VISITING DELEGATIONS, BOTH CONGRESSIONAL AND EXECUTIVE, BEYOND THE USUAL LENINGRAD-MOSCOW CIRCUIT (ALTHOUGH NOT TO THE THREE BALTIC CAPITALS, WITHOUT CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF OUR "NON-RECOGNITION" POLICY). WE BELIEVE THAT VISITS TO REPUBLIC CAPITALS WOULD RECEIVE FAR GREATER LOCAL ATTENTION THAN THEY RECEIVE IN THE MORE JADED PRESENT AND FORMER CAPITALS OF THE COUNTRY.

--IF THE SOVIETS CONTINUE TO REJECT OUR EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A CONSULATE IN VLADIVOSTOCK, WE SHOULD CONSIDER TAKING ACTIVE STEPS TOWARD THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A U.S. CONSULATE IN TASHKENT AS OUR PART OF THE THIRD PAIR OF CONSULATES AGREED WITH THE SOVIETS IN 1974. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF VLADIVOSTOCK, IT SEEMS TO US THAT FOR ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC REASONS, CENTRAL ASIA SHOULD BE THE SITE OF OUR NEXT CONSULATE, AND UZBEKISTAN, WITH THE LARGEST POPULATION OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS, IS THE LOGICAL CHOICE. ALTHOUGH MUCH WORK REMAINS TO BE DONE BEFORE OUR CONSULATE IN KIEV IS OPENED, THE LEAD-TIME IN ESTABLISHING OFFICES HERE IS SO GREAT THAT IT IS NONE TOO SOON TO BEGIN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SOVIETS ON A THIRD CONSULATE. INITIATING SUCH TALKS WOULD DEMONSTRATE OUR INTEREST IN EXPANDING CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS, AND MIGHT MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE AN ADVANCE PARTY IN PLACE BY 1980.

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--THE U.S. PRESENCE IN THE NON-RUSSIAN REPUBLICS COULD  
ALSO BE EXPANDED BY ENCOURAGING U.S. SCHOLARS TO STUDY  
IN THEM. FEW OF THOSE WHO SPEND EXTENDED PERIODS OF  
TIME STUDYING IN THE SOVIET UNION ARE LOCATED OUTSIDE  
OF LENINGRAD AND MOSCOW. IF THEY WERE, RECENT EXPERIENCE  
SUGGESTS THAT THEY WOULD PROVIDE A USEFUL DIRECT SOURCE  
OF INFORMATION TO THE EMBASSY AND MAKE INFORMED CONTRI-  
BUTIONS TO SCHOLARLY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN  
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THE REPUBLICS UPON THEIR RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES.  
WE SHOULD TRY TO FIND A WAY TO SELECT AND FUND QUALIFIED  
PEOPLE WHO ARE INTERESTED IN STUDYING IN THE REPUBLICS.

--IN ORDER TO SUPPORT MORE INTENSIVE PRIVATE U.S. STUDY  
OF THE MINORITY AREAS, CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO  
FEDERAL FUNDING OF GRADUATE STUDY AND RESEARCH PROGRAMS



IN THE U.S. SUCH AS THE UKRAINIAN RESEARCH CENTER AT HARVARD AND THE CENTRAL ASIAN PROGRAM AT COLUMBIA. WITHOUT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT STUDY PROGRAMS ON THE SOVIET NATIONALITIES WILL HAVE THE CAPACITY TO PRODUCE THE SPECIALISTS WE NEED IN THIS AREA.

12. CONCLUSION. WE THINK IT IMPORTANT THAT THE SOVIET MINORITY NATIONALITY QUESTION BE KEPT IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE. THERE ARE OTHER ISSUES VIS-A-VIS THE SOVIET UNION WHICH TOUCH FAR MORE FUNDAMENTAL U.S. INTERESTS. MOREOVER, U.S. ABILITY TO AFFECT SOVIET NATIONALITY DEVELOPMENTS, PARTICULARLY BY MEANS CONSONANT WITH OUR MORE FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVES, IS VERY LIMITED AND LIKELY TO REMAIN SO. WITHIN THIS FRAME WORK, HOWEVER, THERE EXISTS A GENUINE U.S. INTEREST IN THE CONTINUATION OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS WITHIN THE MINORITY REPUBLICS AND SOME TOOLS, SUCH AS THOSE DISCUSSED ABOVE, TO FURTHER THAT INTEREST.  
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